



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 8
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REF: 8EPR-ER

POLLUTION REPORT LIBBY ASBESTOS Libby, Lincoln County, Montana

I. HEADING

Date: April 19, 2001
Site Name: Libby Asbestos (Export & Screening Plants)
From: Paul Peronard, OSC
Duc Nguyen, OSC
To: Patty Smith, EPA Headquarters
POLREP No.: #3

II. BACKGROUND

Site No.: BC
Response Authority: CERCLA
CERCLIS No: MT0009083840
NPL Status: NA
Action Memorandum Status: Approved 5/23/00
Start Date : 6/01/00
Demobilization Date: TBD
Completion Date: TBD

III. SITE INFORMATION

A. Incident Category

Time Critical, Fund-Lead and PRP-Lead

B. Site Description (Please see the initial POLREP)

1. Site Location

The Site is located in Montana within Sections 3 and 10, T.30N.,R.31W. of the Libby Quadrangle in the County of Lincoln.



2. Description of Threat (Please see the initial POLREP)

C. Preliminary Assessment/Site Inspection Results

The Removal Action authorized by the Action Memorandum dated May 23, 2000 was initially to address the threats posed by high levels of amphibole asbestos at the Screening Plant including the Kootenai Development Company (KDC) Properties (EPA-lead) and The Export Plant (PRP-lead). During the course of the removal, W.R. Grace denied access to the mine for repository and to the KDC properties for the cleanup, which resulted in 90,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil being currently stockpiled at the Screening Plant and KDC properties and which still need to be cleaned up. Additionally, subsequent sampling has identified high levels of amphibole asbestos in homes, Libby schools, and other affected areas that require for time-critical removal actions.

- **Schools:** On February 8, 2001, the Superintendent of Libby Schools notified and requested EPA's help in testing and possibly removing the high school and middle school running tracks. Preliminary results from the investigation conducted in March 2001 show: 3-5% by PLM of amphibole asbestos concentration in the subsurface vermiculite ore tailings of the running tracks (Libby High School and Libby Middle School), 2% by PLM in the ice skating rink at the Plummer Elementary School. It also learned that this materials may have been used in other areas in Libby. Therefore, the scope of the investigation has been expanded to include other elementary schools, middle schools, city parks, golf courses, and daycare centers in Libby areas.
- **Residential Areas:** Several residences (i.e. the Brownlee resident) have been found with piles of unexpanded vermiculite used as fill materials outside their homes (2-5% asbestos by PLM). One particular residence (the Seifkie), approximately 5-acres, consists of a home, two 80-foot long buildings storing asbestos-contaminated equipment that once was used at the mine and processing areas, and one 40-foot long metal shop constructed with sluice pipes that also were used at the mine.
- **The Rainey Creek Road:** The road was used to transport the vermiculite ore from the Zonolite mine to the processing facilities. It was built with material from gravel pits; but sand materials (Pyroxene) containing asbestos, that were used to sand the road in the winter, were imported from the vermiculite mine. The road is contaminated with asbestos and generates significant airborne concentrations of asbestos, even with normal traffic activities, if no dust suppression is implemented. The 6-mile road is being used for recreation and a hauling route for logging company. It is owned by several entities - the Lincoln County owns from its intersection

with Highway 37 to the lower pond; W.R. Grace owns from the lower pond to Jackson Creek; and the US Forest Service owns after Jackson Creek.

IV. RESPONSE INFORMATION

A. Situation

1. Current situation/removal actions to date:

The Export Plant: (See initial report for background information)

- *All contaminated soil has been removed; 5 buildings on-site have been decontaminated. Final grading to its original condition was completed in April, 2001. A dispute relating to the restoration of the decontaminated buildings is still unresolved. The contention is that when W.R. Grace decontaminated those buildings by removing the interior walls and wooden floors in conjunction with building deterioration, it made those buildings structurally unsound - resulting in a very high cost for restoration.*

The Screening Plant (80 % Completion): (See the initial report for background information)

- **Removal Activities:** *As of November 17, 2000, all of the Raintree Nursery and Wise properties have been completely excavated and backfilled. Based on the test pits performed, soil contaminated with greater than 2% asbestos was found at several areas at a 10-foot depth. For the approximately 40,000 cubic yards of asbestos-excavated soil, EPA is still temporarily stockpiling debris and excavated soil in the long shed and has implemented winter erosion control measures. Five sediment basins were installed to collect any run-off water from the temporary stockpiles. A special membrane was placed at four-foot excavation depth prior to backfilling on the north side of the Site. The final grading at the nursery was completed on November 20, 2000, using approximately 45,000 cubic yards of borrowed fill materials imported from the Plume Creek and Nixon pits. The site is scheduled to be shut down for the winter on November 30, 2000.*

Since the Site was recommended to the National Register of Historic Places, significant cultural artifacts and dateable organic items (i.e. bone and charcoal) which are approximately 7,000 years old, were found by archeologists at the south end of the Screening Plant.

EPA is finalizing the settlement with the Parkers (Raintree's owners) for

the demolished house/business house, greenhouses, and unsalvageable items at the nursery.

- *Disposal: Because W.R. Grace refused EPA access to the mine for a repository, EPA is working with Lincoln County and proposing to build a separate cell adjacent to the existing landfill for an alternative repository site.*

Medical Testing Program: (See the initial report for background information)

- *As of October 31, 2000, 6,415 appointments have been scheduled and 5,939 individuals have been screened. For individuals in Elko, Nevada, 93 appointments have been scheduled and 70 individuals have been screened.*
- *Preliminary Analysis Results: For X-Ray data, ATSDR reported for 4,220 participants and detected abnormalities in 313 (5-6%) - 125 were heart-related, 60 showed a density in the lung, and 35 detected pleural thickening. Abnormal x-rays are referred to the participant's personal physician for diagnosis and treatment.*

On-Going Projects:

- *Performance Evaluation Project - EPA has tasked USGS to perform fiber research, performance evaluation sample preparation, and AVRIS flyover with data interpretation.*
- *The Phase II-Draft Sampling Plan to focus on residential sampling has been developed and sent to HQ (OPPT, OERR) for a second review. The sampling activities for approximately 30 homes in Libby (Montana) are anticipated to be conducted in February, 2001.*
- *On September 29, 2000, the ISSI Consulting Group, which has contracted with EPA to manage the sample databases, to develop and refine analytical methods in solid media, and to update the risk assessment protocol for the Libby Asbestos Site, informed EPA that the company was having financial difficulties and on the verge of filing bankruptcy. As a result, EPA is immediately tasking DOT (Volpe Center) to take over this time-critical Performance Evaluation Study Project.*
- *Anticipated Critical Deadlines: Phase II-Draft Sampling Plan to focus on residential sampling (December, 2000) and Draft Risk Assessment Protocol for Peer Review (April, 2001).*

Asbestos and Public Health Conference (21-23, 2000):

More than a hundred of Libby's residents attended the three-day conference in Libby. Some residents came to learn more about asbestos-related illnesses, roles and responsibilities of different agencies, and status of clean-up/sampling activities in Libby. Others came to express their anger and frustrations of not receiving health care support for asbestos victims. The conference was sponsored by EPA, ATSDR, MT Dept. of Environmental Quality, MT Dept. of Public Health and Human Services, OSHA, MSHA, NIOSH, St. Johns Lutheran Hospital, and several local health agencies.

ATSDR, PHHS, and EPA representatives reiterated commitments to provide environmental clean-up, support, and explore potential ways to pay for the medical coverage for victims of asbestos-related diseases.

2. Enforcement

- *On September 28, 2000, W.R. Grace sent a 30-page letter commenting on EPA's Unilateral Administrative Order and the Administrative Records. In the letter, W.R. Grace said: "Nothing in EPA's letter (July 26, 2000) changes our conclusion that the order to perform the time-critical removal action is arbitrary and capricious EPA's action is otherwise not in accordance with the law and is inconsistent with NCP." The content in this letter is focused on the Export Plant removal action. W.R. Grace will send another letter to comment on the Screening Plant and other aspects of the administrative record. The EPA team has been working to respond to the W.R. Grace's letter.*
- *In the past, W.R. Grace has refused EPA access to the KDC properties for asbestos removal activities. These two properties are part of the Screening Plant. On September 14, 2000, EPA filed suit in U.S. District Court in Missoula, Montana against W.R. Grace seeking to access the KDC properties for removal and the mine for repository. On October 19, 2000, W.R. Grace sent a letter voluntarily offering to cleanup the KDC properties. A court hearing is scheduled for December 1, 2000 in Missoula, Montana.*
- *On November 16, 2000, EPA sent a letter to W.R. Grace addressing the concern of asbestos-airborne dust detected at the Rainey Creek Road. This could result in a stop of truck hauling of asbestos-excavated soil to the Zonolite mine. During the week of November 10, 2000, elevated concentration of asbestos were detected due to lack of dust suppression.*

B. Planned Removal Actions

- *Continue revamping and developing the sampling and analytical*

techniques as well as revising the risk assessment model for tremolite asbestos risk.

- *Continue to oversight the removal activities at the Export Plant and implement winter erosion measures at the Screening Plant.*

C. Next Steps

- *EPA is working with ATSDR, Public Health Services (PHS) , Montana Department of Health and Human Services (MDPHHS) and locals to identify short term and long term needs of cleanup and health care for the Libby community.*
- *ATSDR is working with the state and local health authorities to transfer the medical testing program by the end of November, 2000.*
- *For national consistency on clean-up action levels for asbestos related removals, Region VIII has worked closely with NIOSH, HQ and other EPA regions to develop or revamp the risk assessment model and clean-up action levels for residential clean-up including asbestos associated with attic insulation.*

D. Key Issues

- *Establishing a repository for the excavated soil and debris at the Screening Plant.*
- *Seeking agreements to access 1) the mine (oversight and repository), and 2) KDC properties adjacent to the Screening Plant for cleanup (which now is owned by W.R. Grace).*

V. COST INFORMATION

Total Site Ceiling	\$5,815,000
Committed Costs (as of 9/30/00):	\$3,589,273

VI. DISPOSITION OF WASTES

(None at this time)